Maritime Integration Center
Increasing the Fleet's Capabilities with Reach Back

By Dean Wence

The Navy's Fleet Information Warfare Center (FIWC) established the Maritime Integration Center (MIC) to provide information operations (IO) expertise and resources to deployed forces. The MIC acts as a central point for global maritime IO awareness. FIWC already deploys unit members to carrier strike group (CSG) and expeditionary strike group (ESG) staffs, numbered fleet commanders, special warfare units and Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) units to integrate IO into fleet exercises and real-world operations. With the establishment of the MIC, the fleet has reach-back capability to IO expertise and a second set of eyes for IO planning.

The MIC, recently relocated to the Naval Network Warfare Command (NETWARCOM) Network, Information Operations and Space Center (NIOSC) at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va., is now a 24/7 operation. The MIC watch focuses on the five core competencies of IO: psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception (MILDEC), electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations (CNO – attack/defense) and operations security (OPSEC).

The NIOSC is a brand new, state-of-the-art operations center that will manage worldwide naval operational and technical support across strategic, operational and tactical levels. Ultimately, the NIOSC will promote data sharing and foster an environment of collaboration required to plan and respond to current and future threats.

Through the deployed FIWC teams, the MIC acts as an integrated knowledge repository where knowledge and information can be pushed or pulled to the fleet. MIC functions include: modeling, access to historical data and subject matter experts, collaborative IO planning, reach-back capabilities, and monitoring for chat rooms, portals and Web sites.

FIWC retains the expert knowledge in the MIC by ensuring knowledge is passed to deployed watch staffs. MIC watch officers and watchstanders are usually senior unit members who start out as ship deployers on an IO team. When the members return from deployment, they provide a post deployment brief which is incorporated into the training for outgoing deployers and fleet IO courses. This ensures that IO courses and deployers always have the most current information. By the time unit members become MIC watchstanders, they have been on one, two and sometimes three deployments. Passing on this knowledge ensures watchstanders understand what the MIC deployers are doing, and it helps watchstanders anticipate their needs.

By using this approach, the MIC has already reduced the manpower needed for deployed IO teams. Before the MIC was established, FIWC was deploying one officer, one chief petty officer, two petty officers and a computer network defense asset per deployed CSG or ESG. Now, the MIC has eliminated the need to deploy two petty officers. The goal is to eventually deploy one person to provide MIC support. FIWC is also integrating Reservists into the MIC watch, taking advantage of the Reservists' military and civilian experiences, thus reducing the workload for active duty personnel.

The MIC has already supported real-world operations, such as tsunami relief through Operation Unified Assistance and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Joint and international exercises supported include Summer Pulse Exercise 2004, Terminal Fury and Joint Task Force Exercise. Whether it is providing collaborative IO planning to the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander, Information Warfare Commander or giving NETWARCOM an overall global IO picture, the MIC is a knowledge asset that is making a difference for the warfighter.

Dean Wence is a knowledge management program analyst with the Department of the Navy Chief Information Officer. *CHIPS*